

Trump Organization, CFO indicted on tax fraud charges

By MICHAEL R. SISK and
TOM HAYS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's company and its longtime finance chief were charged Thursday in what prosecutors called a "sweeping and audacious" tax fraud scheme in which the executive collected more than \$1.7 million in off-the-books compensation, including apartment rent, car payments and school tuition. Trump himself was not charged, but prosecutors noted that he signed some of the compensation checks at the center of the alleged scheme. It is the first criminal case to come out New York authorities' two-year investigation into the former president's

business dealings.

According to the indictment, from 2005 through this year, the Trump Organization and Chief Financial Officer Allen Weisselberg cheated the state and city out of taxes by conspiring to pay senior executives off the books by way of lucrative fringe benefits and other means.

Weisselberg alone was accused of defrauding the federal government, the state and the city out of more than \$1 million in unpaid taxes and tax refunds to which he was not entitled.

The most serious charge against Weisselberg, grand larceny, carries five to 15 years in prison.



Continued on next page

Allen Weisselberg, center, departs Manhattan criminal court, Thursday, July 1, 2021, in New York. Associated Press

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Continued from Front

The tax fraud charges against the company are punishable by a fine of double the amount of unpaid taxes, or \$250,000, whichever is larger.

The 73-year-old Weisselberg has intimate knowledge of the Trump Organization's financial dealings from nearly five decades at the company. And the charges against him could give prosecutors the means to pressure him to cooperate with the investigation and tell them what he knows.

Both Weisselberg and lawyers for the Trump Organization pleaded not guilty. Weisselberg was ordered to surrender his passport and released without bail, leaving the courthouse without comment.

In a statement, Trump branded the case a "political Witch Hunt by the Radical Left Democrats." Weisselberg's lawyers said he will "fight these charges."

The case is being led by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. and New York Attorney General Letitia James, both Democrats.

Vance, who leaves office at the end of the year, has been investigating a wide range of matters involving Trump and the Trump Organization, such as hush-money payments paid to women on Trump's behalf and whether the company falsified the value of its properties to obtain loans or reduce its tax bills.

The news comes as Trump has been more seriously discussing a possible comeback run for president in 2024. He has ramped up his public appearances, in-



Letitia James, Attorney General of New York, center, and Cyrus Vance Jr., New York County District Attorney, right, leave Manhattan criminal court, Thursday, July 1, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

cluding holding his first rallies since leaving the White House.

In announcing the grand jury indictment, Carey Dunne, the top prosecutor in the district attorney's office, said; "Politics has no role in the jury chamber, and I can assure you it had no role here." He outlined a 15-year scheme "orchestrated by the most senior executives" at the Trump Organization.

The Trump Organization is the entity through which the former president manages his many ventures, including his investments in office towers, hotels and golf courses, his many marketing deals and his TV pursuits. Trump's sons Donald Jr. and Eric have been in charge of the day-to-day operations since he became president.

In addition to exposing the Trump Organizations to fines, the criminal case could make it more difficult for the business to secure bank loans or strike deals — a hit that comes at a particularly bad time, with the company already reeling from lost business because

of the coronavirus and the backlash over the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

"Companies that are being indicted, whether they are private or public, big or small, face serious collateral consequences," said Daniel Horwitz, a white-collar defense attorney. "Companies in the financial services industry are reluctant to do business with them. Their access to capital is limited or cut off, as is their ability to place their liquid assets with banks and brokerages."

Weisselberg came under scrutiny in part because of questions about his son's use of a Trump apartment at little or no cost.

Weisselberg's son Barry — who managed a Trump-operated ice rink in Central Park — paid no reported rent while living in a Trump-owned apartment in 2018, and he was charged just \$1,000 per month — far below typical Manhattan prices — while living in a Trump apartment from 2005 to 2012, the indictment said. Allen Weisselberg himself, an intensely private man who lived for years in a

modest home on Long Island, continued to claim residency there despite living in a company-paid Manhattan apartment, prosecutors said.

By doing so, Weisselberg concealed that he was a New York City resident and avoided paying about \$900,000 in federal, state and city income taxes, instead collecting about \$133,000 in refunds to which he was not entitled, prosecutors said.

According to the indictment, Weisselberg paid rent on his Manhattan apartment with company checks and directed the company to pay for his utility bills and parking. The company also paid for private school tuition for Weisselberg's grandchildren with checks bearing Trump's signature, as well as for Mercedes cars driven by Weisselberg and his wife, and gave him cash to hand out tips around Christmas.

Such perks were listed on internal Trump company documents as part of Weisselberg's employee compensation but were not included on his W-2 forms or otherwise reported, and the company did not withhold taxes on their value, prosecutors said.

Trump's company also issued checks, at Weisselberg's request, to pay for personal expenses and upgrades to his homes and an apartment used by one of his sons, such as new beds, flat-screen TVs, carpeting and furniture, prosecutors said.

Barry Weisselberg's ex-wife has been cooperating with investigators and given them reams of tax records

and other documents.

Two other Trump executives who were not identified by name also received substantial under-the-table compensation, including lodging and the payment of automobile leases, the indictment said.

Weisselberg has a reputation as a workaholic deeply devoted to Trump's interests. So far, there is no sign that the man regarded by Trump's daughter Ivanka as a "fiercely loyal" deputy is about to turn on the former president.

Trump has said his company's actions were standard practice in the business and in no way a crime. The Trump Organization accused the district attorney's office of using Weisselberg as "a pawn in a scorched-earth attempt to harm the former president." It said the DA's office and the IRS have never before brought criminal charges against a company over employee benefits. Vance fought a long battle to get Trump's tax records and has been subpoenaing documents and interviewing company executives and other Trump insiders.

James Repetti, a tax lawyer and professor at Boston College Law School, said a company like the Trump Organization would generally have a responsibility to withhold taxes not just on salary but on other forms of compensation.

Another prominent New York City real estate figure, the late Leona Helmsley, was convicted of tax fraud in a federal case that arose from her company paying to remodel her home without her reporting that as income. □

U.S. hits 17 nations for not combating human trafficking

By **MATTHEW LEE**

AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Thursday designated 17 countries as not doing enough to combat human trafficking and warned them of potential U.S. sanctions. The administration also called out several U.S. allies and friends, including Israel, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal and Turkey, for backsliding in their efforts.

The designations came in the State Department's annual "Trafficking in Persons" report, which cited the coronavirus pandemic as a cause for a surge in human slavery between 2020 and 2021. The report covering 188 nations and territories said the outbreak had put millions more people at risk for exploitation and distracted some governments from efforts to stem human trafficking.

The report classified the 17 mostly authoritarian nations as "Tier 3" for failing to meet minimal standards to stop what Secretary of State Antony Blinken called



Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks about the release of the State Department's annual "Trafficking in Persons" report Thursday, July 1, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

an "inhumane cycle of discrimination and injustices." The designation means that without a presidential waiver those countries could lose some U.S. assistance, although decisions on such penalties will not be made until later this year.

"It's a global crisis, it's an enormous source of human suffering," Blinken said, citing estimates that almost

25 million people, many of them women and children, are victims. "This crime is an affront to human rights. It's an affront to human dignity."

Newcomers to the Tier 3 category are Malaysia and Guinea-Bissau, both of which had been on a watchlist for a downgrade for three years and were ineligible to avoid the des-

ignation because they had failed to take steps to improve their anti-human trafficking efforts.

They join Afghanistan, Algeria, Burma, China, Comoros, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, North Korea, Russia, South Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Venezuela in the worst offender category. Most of those countries are already sub-

ject to U.S. sanctions for other reasons.

Meanwhile, six valued U.S. partners and friends — Cyprus, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland — were downgraded from the top Tier 1 category to Tier 2. That means they don't meet international standards for fighting trafficking but are making significant efforts to do so. No penalties are attached to a Tier 2 designation, Israel was cited for backsliding on "serious and sustained" initiatives to combat trafficking, including a decrease in investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators, and severe understaffing at its only authority directly charged with dealing with the matter.

The report cited U.S. treaty ally New Zealand for not initiating any prosecutions for labor trafficking and weak prison sentences for child sex traffickers that "significantly weakened deterrence, undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, and did not adequately address the nature of the crime." □

CBO projects federal deficit will hit \$3 trillion this year

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER**

AP Economics Writer

The Congressional Budget Office says that the federal budget deficit will again hit \$3 trillion this year, \$745 billion more than its estimate five months ago, as it takes into account the cost of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue plan.

In an updated forecast Thursday, the CBO said the deficit for the current 2021 budget year, which ends Sept. 30, will be the second-largest in history, coming in shy of last year's record shortfall of \$3.13 trillion.

Federal debt, meanwhile, will rise to 102.7% of the total economy this year from 100.1% last year, according to the CBO forecast. This year's number would eclipse last year's as the highest debt level since the end of World War II.

The deficits in both years

have been inflated by the trillions of dollars in support Congress passed at the urging of both the Trump and Biden administrations to combat a deep recession triggered by the COVID pandemic.

The CBO estimates that, with the economy improving as vaccines are distributed and the country reopens, the deficit for the 2022 budget year will drop to \$1.15 trillion. That would still be \$97 billion higher than the deficit the CBO estimate back in February. The updated CBO estimates are the first the agency has issued since Biden succeeded in pushing a \$1.9 trillion relief package through Congress in March. That measure sent economic stimulus payments of up to \$1,400 per individual to millions of Americans and provided additional help to small

businesses and the unemployed.

The new CBO report is based on current law and does not include the impact of two infrastructure measures that Biden is hoping to get Congress to enact. The measures include a proposal costing roughly \$1 trillion to boost spending on traditional infrastructure programs such as roads and bridges, and other \$1.8 trillion proposal to increase spending for such things as early childhood education and community college tuition.

The new CBO estimates project that the annual budget deficits will be above \$1 trillion over the next decade except for a brief three-year period from 2023 through 2025 when the annual deficits will come in below that level.

Republicans lawmakers are



In this Aug. 3, 2020, file photo dark clouds and heavy rain sweep over the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

certain to use the new CBO report to argue that Democrats' spending plans are too costly at a time when the economy is recovering. Mayra MacGuiness, president of the Committee for a Responsible Budget, said in a statement that "the strong economic growth projections from CBO show that it is time to pivot away

from further deficit financing and towards paying for things and, ultimately, decreasing the national debt from its current path."

The CBO sees the economy growing a strong 7.4% this year when compared to the fourth quarter of last year, up from a February forecast of GDP growth of 3.7% this year. □

New Mexico gives most U.S. funding to child care of any state

By CEDAR ATTANASIO
Associated Press/Report for America

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico is directing the nation's biggest chunk of federal coronavirus relief money to helping middle-class families pay for child care, a vast expansion aimed at getting parents back to work in one of the poorest states in America.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Thursday that the state will subsidize child care at 350% of the federal poverty line, or about \$93,000 for a family of four. That's up from about \$54,000.

"We're going to double the subsidies for child care," said the Democratic governor, who was flanked by balloons and overlooked a gaggle of young children wearing party hats. She added that the state could one day go even further: "Why don't we have universal access for child care?"

New Mexico's two-year spending commitment will expand eligibility to the highest income levels of any state. It's the largest and latest example of states using pandemic relief aid to subsidize child care. Others include Georgia and Montana, while California is debating a child care funding package.

Some states, like New Jer-



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announces an increase in child care subsidies on Thursday, July 1, 2021, in Santa Fe, N.M.

Associated Press

sey, offer subsidies at 350% of the federal poverty line but only when relatives are providing care.

New Mexico also will be the first state to increase payments to child care providers by using a reimbursement formula that focuses on the local cost of running child care businesses, instead of the market rate of what parents can pay.

State Early Childhood Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky

called the announcement an "important landmark on our journey towards creating a true cradle-to-career education system that helps all New Mexicans thrive."

Groginsky was pivotal for winning federal approval of the new formula in Washington, D.C., where she served as assistant superintendent of early learning for the District of Columbia before taking the job in

New Mexico. While the formulas are not identical, the experience there provides an idea of how much child care providers will benefit. Child care providers in Washington got a 24% to 57% increase in reimbursement during the transition in 2019, according to officials there. No providers saw a decrease.

Early childhood advocates say the new rules will lead to increased pay for child

care workers, who often make just above minimum wage. They also expect improvements in worker-to-child ratios, the main benchmark of child care center quality.

"So for your child what that means is that there's a lower ratio between (staff) and children," said Katherine Freeman, CEO at Growing Up New Mexico. "Why is that the most significant thing? Because children need individual attention." Parents should see immediate benefits, especially those who earned too much to qualify for past subsidies but too little to pay for child care without spending half their paycheck.

The expansion is paid for in part by \$300 million in federal awards that expire in 2024. Democratic state lawmakers already have a plan in motion to increase child care funding long term by tapping into a unique \$20 billion state endowment funded by resource extraction royalties and market investments.

A ballot initiative before voters next year could increase the amount of funding from the endowment to the state's Early Childhood Education and Care Department and possibly replace the federal funding when it expires. □

Chicago police report killings down, shootings up this year



Chicago police work the scene where at least six people were shot in the 2000 block of East 71st Street in the South Shore neighborhood, late Sunday, June 27, 2021, in Chicago.

Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Fewer killings were reported over

the first six months of 2021 in Chicago compared with

the same period last year even as the number of shootings and people shot increased, according to statistics released Thursday by police.

Between Jan. 1 and Wednesday, there were 332 killings in the city — six fewer than in the first six months of 2020. Both numbers are much higher than the 246 recorded over the first half of 2019.

Chicago has seen a number of mass shootings and mass killings in recent weeks. Coupled with others around the country in June, shootings stoked concerns about a spike in U.S. gun violence heading into the

summer, as coronavirus restrictions ease and more people are free to socialize.

Chicago ended 2020 with 769 slayings. So far this year, there have been 1,515 shooting incidents and 1,880 people shot in the city. Shootings incidents and victims over the first six months of 2020 totaled 1,377 and 1,656, respectively.

More than 5,900 guns, including 290 assault weapons, have been seized so far this year, police said.

"Each illegal gun taken off our streets is potentially a life saved," Chicago Police Superintendent David

Brown said in a statement. "We've asked so much from our officers over the past six months, who continue to answer the call each day and night in service to our city."

The latest numbers from police come as an 8-year-old girl and a 30-year-old woman were wounded and a 40-year-old woman was slain when shots were fired early Thursday at a home on the city's far South Side.

Separately, two 15-year-olds and two 18-year-olds also were wounded Wednesday night during a drive-by shooting in southwest Chicago. □

Amsterdam mayor apologizes for city fathers' role in slavery

By ALEKSANDAR FURTULA
and MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The mayor of Amsterdam apologized Thursday for the extensive involvement of the Dutch capital's former governors in the global slave trade, saying the moment had come for the city to confront its grim history. Debate about the role of Amsterdam's city fathers in the slave trade has been going on for years, but it has gained more attention amid the global reckoning with racial injustice that followed the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

"It is time to engrave the great injustice of colonial slavery into our city's identity. With big-hearted and unconditional recognition," Mayor Femke Halsema said. "Because we want to be a government for those for whom the past is painful and its legacy a burden." While apologizing, she also stressed that "not a single Amsterdammer alive today is to blame for the past."

The Dutch government has in the past expressed deep regret for the nation's historic role in slavery, but has stopped short of a formal apology. Prime Minister Mark Rutte said last year that such an apology could polarize society. An independent commis-



Mayor Femke Halsema apologized for the involvement of the city's rulers in the slave trade during a nationally televised annual ceremony in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Thursday, July 1, 2021, marking the abolition of slavery in its colonies in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles on July 1, 1863.

Associated Press

sion that discussed the issue in recent months issued a report Thursday advising the central government to apologize, saying it would "help heal historic suffering."

Interior Minister Kajsa Ollongren attended the ceremony in Amsterdam but did not comment directly on the call for a government apology.

Black activist and actor Patrick Mathurin said some in the Netherlands try to ignore the country's colo-

nial past, "but through our activism, we forced them to look at it. And also what happened, of course, with George Floyd made it all ... evolve faster." Halsema said history casts a shadow that reaches into the present day.

"The city officials and the ruling elite who, in their hunger for profit and power, participated in the trade in enslaved people, in doing so entrenched a system of oppression based on skin color and race," she said.

"The past from which our city still draws its distinctive commercial spirit is therefore indivisible from the persistent racism that still festers."

She closed her speech with the words: "On behalf of the College of Mayor and Alderpersons, I apologize." Cheers and applause erupted from the small group of invited guests sitting on socially distanced white chairs.

The apology came during an annual ceremony

marking the abolition of slavery in Dutch colonies in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles on July 1, 1863. The anniversary is now known as Ketikoti, which means Chains Broken.

Activists say many people who had been enslaved were forced to work without pay for their former masters for a further decade.

Research into the involvement of Amsterdam's city fathers in the slave trade and slavery was commissioned by the municipality in 2019.

Halsema said it showed that "from the end of the 16th century until well into the 19th century, Amsterdam's involvement was direct, worldwide, large-scale, multifaceted and protracted."

Amsterdam municipality is not alone in apologizing for its role in slavery. In 2007, then-London Mayor Ken Livingstone made an emotional speech apologizing for the city's involvement. And a year ago the Bank of England apologized for the links some of its past governors had with slavery. Halsema doesn't have to leave her official residence on one of Amsterdam's mansion-lined canals to be reminded of the city's deeply rooted ties to slavery. □

France, Mexico sign deal against trafficking in artifacts

PARIS (AP) — France and Mexico signed an agreement Thursday on cooperating against the trafficking of cultural artifacts, a deal that the Mexican foreign minister called an important step toward recovering and protecting Mexico's cultural heritage. Details of the deal weren't immediately released.

It came after Mexico lodged a complaint with the French government against a big auction of pre-Hispanic sculptures and other artifacts by Christie's of Paris earlier this year. Paris auction houses often sell Indigenous artifacts that are already on the art

market, despite protests from activists who say they should be returned to their

native lands.

In signing the cooperation agreement, the French



French Minister for Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian, right, and Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard show documents during their meeting in Paris, Thursday, July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

and Mexican foreign ministers acknowledged Thursday that their countries have different laws around cultural objects but promised to work together in the future to fight trafficking of artwork.

"The recuperation and protection of our cultural goods is a huge issue for us," Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said. "I am happy that on this occasion France accompanies us and supports this initiative despite our legal systems being very different. We haven't always shared the same posture, but this agreement is very positive."

He said the agreement includes mechanisms "to impede in the maximum way possible the commercialization — which is illegal — of pieces that are important for the historical and cultural patrimony of Mexico." The Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History protested the Christie's Paris sale earlier this year. The collection included a 1,500-year-old stone mask from the ancient city of Teotihuacan, and an ancient statue of the fertility goddess Cihuateotl, apparently from the Totonac culture. The auction brought in more than \$3 million. □

Slovenia's turn at the EU helm off to a tense, rocky start

By **LORNE COOK**

Associated Press

KRANJ, Slovenia (AP) — Slovenia's presidency of the European Union got off to a rocky start Thursday, as the EU's chief executive demanded that the right-wing government end a funding rift with the small Alpine country's main news agency. At a news event meant to usher in Slovenia's six-month term at the EU's helm, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also urged Prime Minister Janez Jansa to swiftly nominate a delegate to the EU prosecutor's office, a new body aimed at investigating graft across the 27-nation bloc. "We need media, and free media, that is critical as an oversight of governmental activities or, for example, European Commission activities. This is the essence of democracy," von der Leyen told reporters during a visit to Slovenia with her team of commissioners. "We think that Slovenia must ensure the independence and the appropriate funding of the public service provided by the



In this May 25, 2021 file photo, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, left, speaks with Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa in Brussels.

Associated Press

agency. So, we expect that swift solutions are found to unblock the funding, and we will follow up the developments," she said. Pressure has been mounting on Jansa's government in recent months as it prepares for its EU presidency, which is largely an agenda-setting bureaucratic role an "honest broker" trying to ensure the smooth adoption of files in a wide-

range of European policies. Last month, some 20,000 people gathered at a central square in the capital, Ljubljana, to demand that the government step down and early elections be held. Several workers' unions and opposition parties joined the demonstration. Critics accuse Jansa of assuming increasingly authoritarian ways similar to those of his ally, Hungary's

hardline Prime Minister Viktor Orban. They claim that Jansa's government has pressured Slovenian media and spurred hate speech, while mishandling the coronavirus crisis. He has come under particular scrutiny for keeping a strangle-hold on funds for Slovenia's only news agency, the STA. But on Thursday he said, somewhat cryptically, that "in Europe, you

usually pay the bill when you get it. Our problem is that we need a document." He did not provide details but said that he expects the problem to be resolved this fall.

Officials in Brussels have also been concerned for some time about Jansa's delay in appointing two legal experts to the European Public Prosecutor's Office, a new body that started work this month with a brief of tackling fraud linked to the EU's budget.

"It is a crucial component to protect EU tax-payers' money," von der Leyen said. "It is very good that Slovenia has signed up to it, and now Slovenia must deliver and cooperate with the EPPO."

"I count on the prime minister to submit names of candidates to the EPPO with utmost urgency," she said. Von der Leyen's remarks came just as the EU's executive branch endorsed Slovenia's plan to revive its economy and stands ready to provide 1.8 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) in grants and 705 million euros (\$836 million) in loans. □

NKorea's Kim vows to boost China ties amid pandemic hardship

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Thursday he'll push to further upgrade relations with China, his main ally, as he struggles to navigate his country out of a deepening crisis linked to the pandemic. Kim made the comments in a message to Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulating him on the 100th founding anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "The Workers' Party of Korea, by its firm unity with the Chinese Communist Party, would raise (North Korea)-China friendship to a new strategic point as required by the times and as desired by the peoples of the two countries," Kim was quoted



In this June 18, 2021, file photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un speaks during a Workers' Party meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea.

Associated Press

as saying. In an apparent reference to the United States, Kim said that "hostile forces' vicious slander and all-round pressure upon the Chinese Communist Party are no more than a last-ditch at-

tempt and they can never check the ongoing advance of the Chinese people," according to KCNA. Kim's message came a day after state media said he had told a powerful Politburo meeting that a "crucial"

lapse in the anti-virus campaign has caused a "great crisis."

He did not elaborate, but there was speculation that Kim may have aimed to raise a call for international assistance, including vaccine shipments.

North Korea maintains some of the world's toughest anti-virus measures, including 1 1/2 years of border shutdowns, despite its much questionable claim to be coronavirus free. Such draconian steps have devastated its already struggling economy, and Kim has said before his country faces the "worst-ever" situation.

It's unclear when North Korea would reopen its border with China, and so far, there are no reports that it has received any vaccines. More than 90% of North Korea's trade goes through

China, which has long been suspected of refusing to fully implement U.N. sanctions against North Korea imposed over its nuclear weapons programs. Experts say China worries about a collapse and chaos in North Korea because it doesn't want refugees flooding over the long border and a pro-U.S., unified Korea on its doorstep.

On Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin held out the possibility of sending assistance to North Korea.

"China and the DPRK have a long tradition of helping each other when they encounter difficulties," Wang said, referring to the North by the initials of its official name.

"If necessary, China will actively consider providing assistance to the DPRK." □

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U.S. publishes list of corrupt officials in Central America

By **SONIA PÉREZ D. and
CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN**
Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — The U.S. State Department has named more than 50 current and former officials, including former presidents and active lawmakers, suspected of corruption or undermining democracy in three Central American countries.

Many of the cases were known in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, but the inclusion of names on the U.S. list buoyed the hopes of anti-corruption crusaders. The list was provided to the U.S. Congress in compliance with the "U.S.-Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act" pushed last year by U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel.

Its release comes at a time that the Biden administration has given new attention to endemic corruption in the region as one of the factors driving Central Americans to migrate to the U.S.



In this Jan. 27, 2010 file photo, wearing the presidential sash, Honduran President Porfirio Lobo and his wife First Lady Rosa Elena wave after Lobo was sworn in as the new president during his inauguration ceremony in Tegucigalpa.

Among the most prominent figures on the list are former Honduras President Jose Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo Sosa and former first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla de Lobo. The

State Department report says Lobo Sosa took bribes from a drug cartel and his wife was involved in fraud and misappropriation of funds. Both deny the alle-

gations. Bonilla's conviction on related charges was invalidated by the Supreme Court last year and she is awaiting a new trial. Perhaps as significant as

Lobo Sosa's inclusion, was the omission of current Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández. U.S. prosecutors in New York have signaled Hernández as having funded his political ascent with bribes from drug traffickers, but he has not been formally charged. His brother, former federal lawmaker Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, was sentenced in New York in March to life in prison.

In El Salvador, former cabinet officials, a judge and the cabinet chief for President Nayib Bukele were placed on the list. Chief of Staff Carolina Recinos has kept a low profile since her name appeared on a shorter State Department list in May, but administration officials say she has maintained her presence in the presidential offices. Thursday's list said she "engaged in significant corruption by misusing public funds for personal benefit" and participated in a money laundering scheme. □

Associated Press

South Africa's Zuma doesn't say if he will comply with jail

By **MOGOMOTSI MAGOME**
Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Former South African president Jacob Zuma has denounced the 15-month prison sentence he has been given by the country's highest court and has not said if he will voluntarily comply with the order to turn himself over to the police.

Legal experts and anti-corruption experts have widely welcomed the Constitutional Court's ruling this week that Zuma should be imprisoned for defying a court order to testify before a judicial inquiry into widespread allegations of corruption during his presiden-

tial term from 2009 to 2018. Zuma criticized the ruling by Justice Sisi Khampepe as "judicially emotional and angry and not consistent with our Constitution," in a statement issued Thursday by the Jacob Zuma Foundation.

Zuma gave no indication of whether he will hand himself over to South Africa's police within five days, as the Tuesday ruling ordered, or if he will wait for police to come and get him after that period expires.

About two hundred of Zuma's supporters, many carrying traditional Zulu shields and sticks, arrived at Nkandla, the former president's home in rural KwaZulu-Na-

tal, to show their support. Among those welcoming the sentence for Zuma was Mac Maharaj, a veteran leader of the ruling African National Congress party who had served as Zuma's presidential spokesman from 2011 until 2015. Maharaj said he resigned because he did not want to be associated with the corruption that he witnessed. "The evidence is overwhelming that under his administration corruption developed to a point where it became endemic in our system," Maharaj told the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He hailed the ruling against



Supporters of former president Jacob Zuma descend on his home in Nkandla, KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa, Thursday, July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

Zuma as a watershed moment for South Africa. "History may find that this was the moment that constitutes the turning point in

our closing the chapter in the abuse of power and corruption, and entrenching our constitutional democracy," Maharaj said. □

Pering's Vice President for International Operation Alberto Perret Gentil: "With us you stay close to the ocean to live your dream"

ORANJESTAD — We interviewed Pering's Vice President for International Operation Alberto Perret Gentil from his apartment at Blue Residences. The Perret Group has been in real estate development in Aruba for quite some time now.

How do you see the real estate market in Aruba moving forward?

Pering is a 70 year old company founded by our father and a close friend back in 1950 and this is our 20th year anniversary in Aruba. We feel nowadays like Arubans and are very thankful to Aruba and its people for welcoming us when we had to move part of our business from our native Venezuela. Irwin my brother has been at the helm of the company for some 35 years and I have been responsible for the Aruba operation since I moved here with my family 14 years ago.

Going back to your question. Aruba is a two tier market; the tourist market



and the local market.

The tourist real estate market is booming because many people from the USA and Canada learned how to work from afar; from their dream destination via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. It has been the best year of our history sales wise. We expect prices on this segment to go up given the high demand and also the increase in construction prices of 15%-20% worldwide. Prices in the US already increased and Aruba's are still lagging. We are seeing also a new trend of people

looking for villas and larger formats like 3BRs, 4BRs and Penthouses with one of the rooms turned into a home office now that they want to spend more time "workationing" from here. Regarding the Aruban local market we expect more supply coming as some people unfortunately won't be able to pay their mortgaged loans given the economic hardships of the last year not allowing allow prices to increase.

But there is a moratorium by the Government on condo-

minium developments.

Since December 2018. I personally think is not warranted. I have heard there are 1000 condos on the pipeline since we got here in 2001, but the reality is different. Look around how many have been built since or how many are currently under construction, 70%, 100 tops?. If you compare the number of vacation condominiums of for example Miami, Puerto Rico or Turks & Caycos vis a vis hotel/timeshare rooms Aruba has proportionately way less. And condominiums are great for the economy; its GDP, in general targeting high income individuals that spend on the island, pay its taxes in addition to the 6% transfer tax on purchase price they must paid to the Government and with very little if any pressure on more immigration.

Why did you choose to live in Blue If you are also the developer of Oceania, Azure and Harbour House.

Each project has its own magic; Oceania has Eagle Beach, one of the very best in the world, Harbour House amazing city and ocean views and the downtown living experience and in Azure I like the lobby/restaurant and pool areas. Don't tell anyone but Blue is my favorite!! I like the expansive landscaped areas and the views toward Eagle Beach from my terrace. It has a more tranquil, private and a more easygoing ambiance. We just installed a new whirlpool, will soon commence works on the Prikichi Lounge at the lobby area and hopefully will finally get the permit for the beach bar across the street by the name of "Laama", an exclusive beach gathering space with tapas and drinks by Chef Urvin Croes from the

Dejavu Group.

Also worth mentioning Infini, competing for the best restaurant in Aruba with Lima Bistro, soon to open at Harbour House. A new spa operator, state of the art fitness center, tennis and beach tennis facilities among others.

But lately we see many penthouses for sale?

That is correct and a great opportunity by the way. Our original owners were mostly wealthy Venezuelans. Many recently moved their permanent residence to Europe and the US and cannot enjoy their "week-end getaway". And currently Venezuelans have restrictions to enter Aruba and thus rather sell. I bought my PH in a resale recently. Large format units are selling like hotcakes in Aruba, people that decided to work from their dream destination and with the best internet in the Caribbean. Workation is here to stay. I personally love the interior design of Blue Residences 3BRs or 5 BRs penthouses, its big balconies overlooking the ocean where we gather with friends and family almost weekly for BBQ or paella, its vaulted ceilings and double the ocean views as is it has two levels.

What keeps you busy these days?

Working on a new development opportunity we hope to announce shortly and staying busy with opening HarbourWalk, the ocean front retail area on Harbour House as well as re launching the "Pa Amor di Nos Aruba" PANA Foundation, our social responsibility arm. Should find more time to spend with wife and kids though.

Any final tip for a person looking to buy a second home in Aruba?

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PALM BEACH —A true once-in-a-lifetime experience is coming up. The stage: an Aruban cunucu house creating a magical ambience. The play: The Chef's Garden; a 6-course culinary voyage by a Michelin-trained chef from Belgium, Griet Vanbrabant on Wednesdays and French-Asian gastronomic ecstasy by Dutch top chef Martijn Liebrechts on Teesdays. You will leave this culinary garden of Eden in an enchanted state creating a memory that will last a lifetime. Be sure to reserve this opportunity before others do. This production is presented to you by Papillon Restaurant.

Sometimes combining the best of the best is a matter of all things falling into place. Every Tuesday and Wednesday from 7pm you are welcomed to enter a world where food is a passion. Papillon Restaurant

presents their guest chefs, Vanbrabant and Liebrechts- who will be on the island for a limited time period - and with The Chef's Garden menu being a fresh concept on the island, we're sure you will fall completely in love with this.

A bit about Griet and Martijn

Vanbrabant is a passionate chef with over 15 years of experience in fine dining menu development, culinary staff management, food preparation and creative recipe design.

She is educated in classic French Cuisine and Modern Gastronomy teachings throughout her international career in Michelin star and the World's 50 Best restaurants such as El Bulli and Comerc 24 in Barcelona, Pujol in Mexico City, Rockpool in Australia. Let her entice you with her succulent, Aruban recipes like they've never tasted before.

Liebrechts is the perfect example



of when career and passion come together. He earned his spurts at Ambe, one of the best French fine dining restaurants Hong Kong has to offer, with 2 Michelin-stars and ranked as the 24th best restaurant in the world. Amber has been the place where he got inspired by the use of Asian ingredients prepared in a classical French way which is still the base of his nowadays cooking style. Moving back to Amsterdam, The Netherlands, he joined the team of former Bib Gourmand restaurant "Wilde Zwijnen", which was awarded the title "The New Dutch Cuisine" by the New York Times. He has been there and done it all around the world.

The menu is carefully done with local products, fresh and perfectly matched with a selection of wines by local sommeliers. Diet options are available; please inform them when you make your reservation.

The Secret Garden & Papillon

This is an in-home dining experience where you will feel you are part of an exclusive setting. Private culinary events are the owner's specialty and their lush, tropical garden is also inviting for you to relax and indulge in hours of authentic culinarian delights, a heaven to foodies. For more than a decade, Papillon restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. They know how to thrill and in collaboration with The Secret Garden we can only expect phenomenal. □

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RESTAURANT

Dutch-American Marines Exercise in Aruba



SAVANETA — The Caribbean Coastal Warrior exercise has been going on in Aruba since the beginning of last month. This is an exercise in which United States Marines (United States Marine Corps) of the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion came to train in Aruba. The exercise is annual, and is about diving skills, also at a tactical level.

The cooperation between the United States and the Netherlands is close. The Marine Corps and the USMC regard each other as permanent partners. Last March, Marines from the Marine Squadron Carib (formerly 32 Raiding Squadron) were on a training in the United States.

The waters of Aruba are an extremely suitable training location for both marine units. With the combination of water temperature and clarity and logistical support from marine barracks Savaneta, the conditions are optimal for an effective and successful exercise.

The exercise is also supervised from the Dutch side by the Defense Diving School and Defense Diving Group. Caribbean Coastal Warrior will last until next weekend. □

Aruba to me...

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. □

For today's newspaper we received a great picture from **Gretchen Smith**.

She wrote:

"This my first time to the island and have found that Aruba to me is relaxation with a great sunset!".

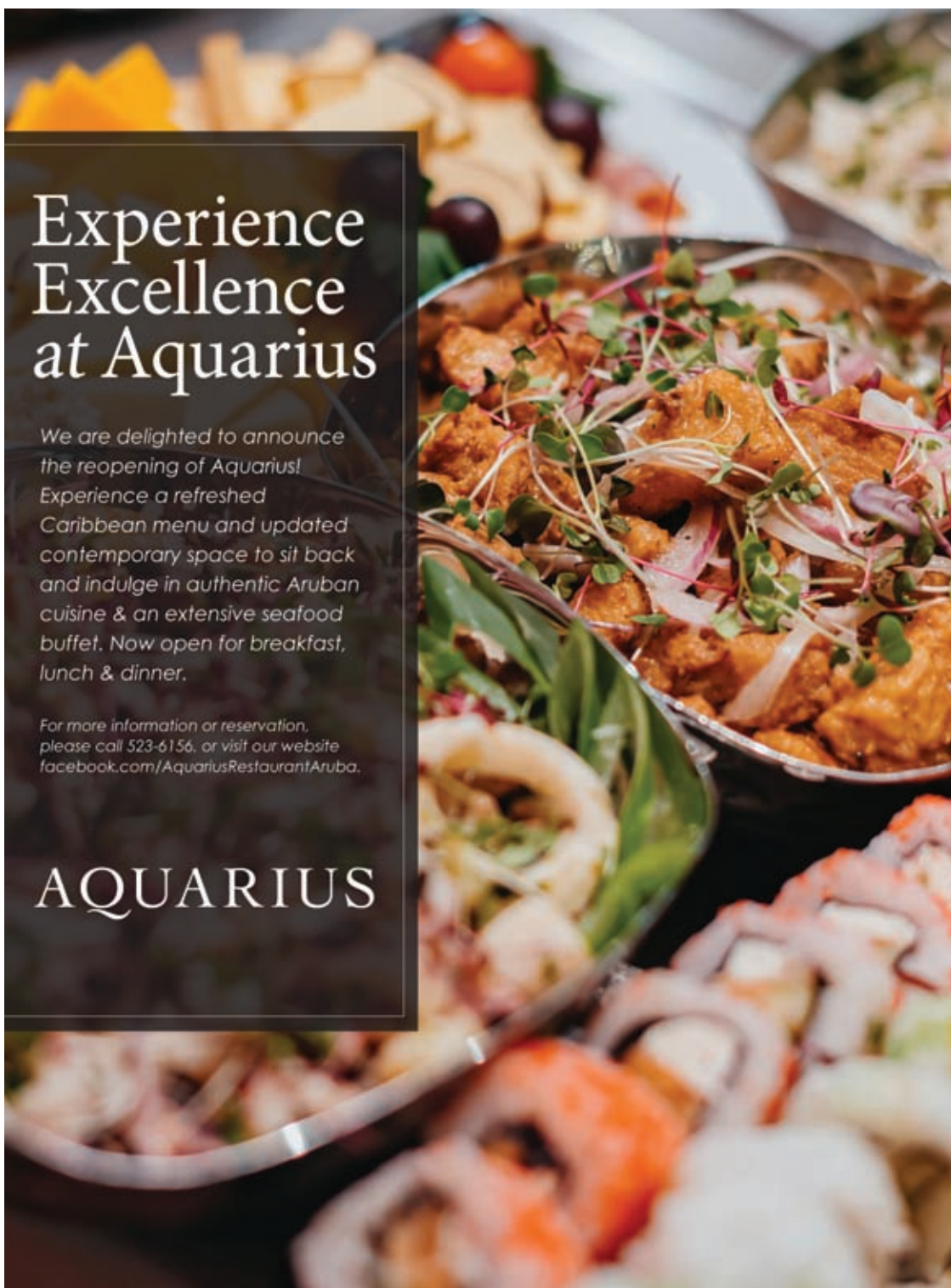


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AQUARIUS



Worried about inflation? Check paystubs, not just pump price

By **STAN CHOE**

NEW YORK (AP) — Everyone would like to get paid more, but the worry on Wall Street is there could be too much of a good thing.

Wages are going up for workers across many industries as the economy roars out of the recession. And in terms of inflation, which is the bogeyman for investors right now, a big and sustained gain in wages would be even more dangerous than the price spikes already seen for oil and other commodities.

When wages go up, they tend to stay there, unlike the up-and-down vagaries of commodities. Lumber prices have already more than halved, for example, after nearly doubling in the first four-plus months of the year. Few workers would willingly give up all or half of their raises.

That's why the upcoming monthly report on the job market, due Friday, could be an even bigger deal for markets than it usually is. Besides showing how many people employers hired, it will also detail how much wages are rising for workers across the country.

Economists expect the report to show a 0.4% rise in average hourly earnings in



A hiring sign shows in Downers Grove, Ill., Thursday, June 24, 2021.

June from a month before. If they're correct, it would be the first time growth has been that high for three straight months, at least since such records began a little more than 15 years ago.

For now, many investors aren't that worried. They see wage growth moderating eventually, which would keep a cap on inflation. More people are getting vaccinated, benefits for unemployed workers are

getting less generous and reopening schools in the fall will allow parents to return to work. All that should mean employers get more applicants to choose from, easing the pressure to raise pay to fill openings.

Other sources of inflation, meanwhile, such as used cars and building materials, should see prices come down as supply bottlenecks and other constraints clear. "We've likely already seen the highest monthly infla-

tion readings of 2021," said Brian Nick, chief investment strategist at Nuveen.

The threat is still real, though. Wage growth so far has been driven mainly by middle- and high-paying industries, such as aerospace products and insurance, according to a review by Morgan Stanley. But that's been broadening out recently.

Restaurants, grocery stores and gasoline stations are all seeing elevated wage

pressures, for example.

Look no further than Chipotle Mexican Grill, which just increased its restaurant wages to an average of \$15 per hour. The company raised prices on its menu by roughly 3.5% to 4% to help cover the additional wages.

"We really prefer not to raise prices, CEO Brian Niccol said at a recent conference hosted by Baird. "But it made sense in this scenario to invest in our employees and get these restaurants staffed and make sure that we had the pipeline of people to support our growth."

CFO Jack Hartung said he expects others in the industry will have to follow suit. Otherwise, they'll lose out on workers.

Therein lies Wall Street's fear about wage growth staying high. On the plus side, higher wages gives workers more money to spend, which in turn drives the economy higher. But in one scenario, companies can't raise their own prices enough to cover their higher payrolls and maintain profits. That worries investors because stock prices tend to track with corporate earnings over the long term. □

Associated Press

130 countries back deal on global minimum tax for companies

By **DAVID MCHUGH**

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)

— Some 130 countries have backed a global minimum tax as part of a worldwide effort to keep multinational firms from dodging taxes by shifting their profits to countries with low rates.

The agreement announced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Thursday also provides for taxing the largest global companies in countries where they earn profits through online businesses but may have no physical presence.

The agreement followed a proposal from U.S. President Joe Biden for at least a 15% rate, an initiative

that propelled the talks toward meeting a deadline for a deal by the middle of this year. The deal now will be discussed by the Group of 20 countries at meetings later this year in hopes of finishing the details in October and implementing the agreement in 2023.

Under the deal, countries could tax their companies' foreign earnings if they go untaxed through subsidiaries in other countries. That would remove the incentive to use accounting and legal schemes to shift profits to low-rate countries since the profits would be taxed at home anyway.

Not all of the 139 countries that joined the talks signed on to the deal. The

proposal to tax countries where they have sales but no physical presence excluded extractive companies such as oil and mining and regulated banks.

The deal now faces more technical work to fill in details and review by the Group of 20 countries, which represent some 80% of the global economy. More discussion is expected at the meeting of the G-20 finance ministers in Venice next week, and then at the full G-20 summit of country leaders in October. The proposal to tax companies where they have revenue but no physical presence would require countries to sign up for a multilateral convention.



In this June 7, 2017 file photo, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) headquarters is pictured in Paris, France.

Associated Press

In the US, Biden has proposed a 21% minimum rate on overseas earnings of big US companies to deter them from shifting profits to

tax havens. Biden's US tax must first pass Congress, where the Democratic president has only a narrow majority. □

CROSSWORD

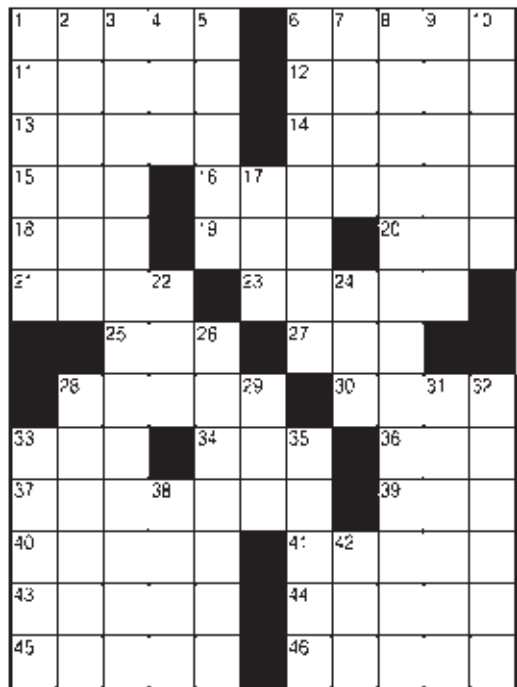
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 "I have no idea"
 - 6 Writer Carr
 - 11 Earthy pigment
 - 12 Full of energy
 - 13 Because of
 - 14 Hotel fixtures
 - 15 Pole worker
 - 16 Opposing opinion
 - 18 Stirrup setting
 - 19 Quarter-back Manning
 - 20 Ave. crossers
 - 21 Prudish
 - 23 Over-whelming desires
 - 25 Put away
 - 27 — Paulo
 - 28 Hog nose
 - 30 Fling
 - 33 Blue
 - 34 "Far out, dude!"
 - 36 Relaxing resort
 - 37 Lima's founder
 - 39 Hem and —
 - 40 Skip the ceremony

- DOWN**
- 1 Prepare for a long pass
 - 2 Eye-related
 - 3 Abby Jimenez book
 - 4 Got together
 - 5 Eat away
 - 6 Shake-spearean conspirator
 - 7 Woeful cry
 - 8 Abby Jimenez book
 - 9 Occurrences
 - 10 Defeats
 - 17 Suffering
 - 22 Chinese chairman
 - 24 Plopped down
 - 26 Tank tops
 - 28 Mariner
 - 29 Road gunk
 - 31 Thinly scattered
 - 32 Finn's friend
 - 33 Used up
 - 35 Church tenet
 - 38 Galoots
 - 42 — Gatos

CAMP QUOTE
LEER AURORA
URGE DIAPER
BOOTHILL
ZOOT SUIT
STEELS MBA
POLLY HOPED
ATM ROUSTS
TOOT TOOT
ROOT BEER
RADIUM IDLE
APIARY DILL
PEELS STAY

Yesterday's answer



7-2

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-2 CRYPTOQUOTE

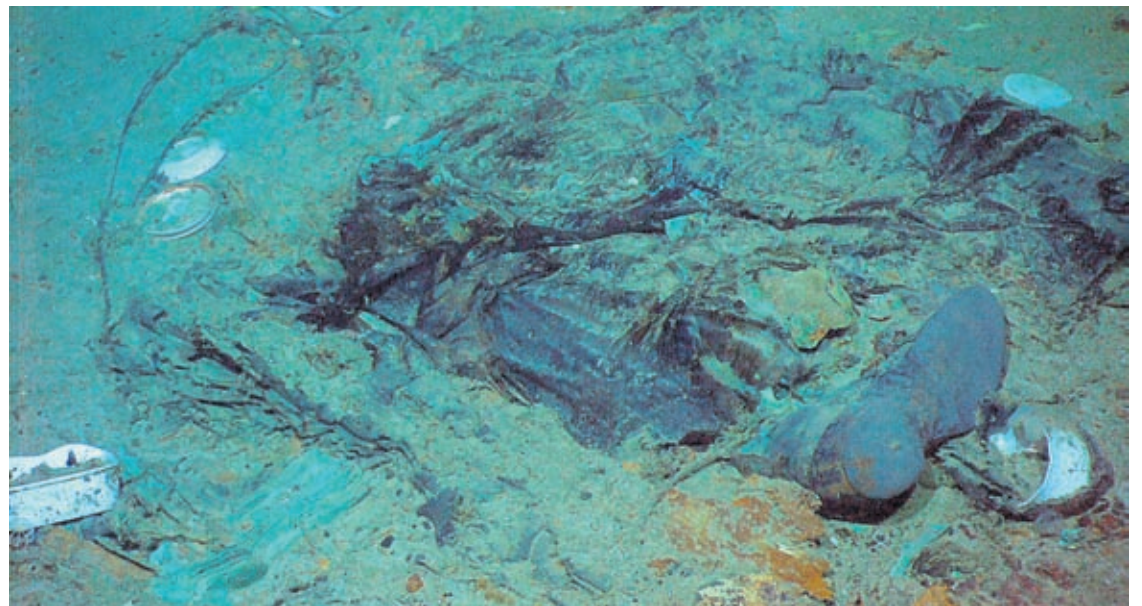
AHDB: AXZA UXHWX DZL HG

ZYUZQG AJQHLP AN EHYY, KCA

UXHWX BLVG HL EHYYHLP

XHD. — XBJKBJA GRBLWBJ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO BURN A BOOK. AND THE WORLD IS FULL OF PEOPLE RUNNING ABOUT WITH LIT MATCHES. — RAY BRADBURY



This 2004 photo provided by the Institute for Exploration, Center for Archaeological Oceanography/University of Rhode Island/NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, shows the remains of a coat and boots in the mud on the sea bed near the Titanic's stern. OceanGate Expeditions, an under-sea exploration company, plans to dive to the sunken Titanic to begin what's expected to be an annual chronicling of the shipwreck's deterioration.

Associated Press

As the Titanic decays, expedition will monitor deterioration

By BEN FINLEY

The Titanic is disappearing. The iconic ocean liner that was sunk by an iceberg is now slowly succumbing to metal-eating bacteria: holes pervade the wreckage, the crow's nest is already gone and the railing of the ship's iconic bow could collapse at any time. Racing against the inevitable, an undersea exploration company's expedition to the site of the wreckage could start this week, beginning what's expected to be an annual chronicling of the ship's deterioration. With the help of wealthy tourists, experts hope to learn more about the vessel as well as the underwater ecosystem that shipwrecks spawn.

"The ocean is taking this thing, and we need to document it before it all disappears or becomes unrecognizable," Stockton Rush, president of OceanGate Expeditions, said Friday from a ship headed to the North Atlantic wreck site.

The 109-year-old ocean liner is being battered by deep-sea currents and bacteria that consumes hundreds of pounds of iron a day. Some have predicted the ship could vanish in a matter of decades as holes yawn in the hull and sections disintegrate.

Since the ship's 1985 discovery, the 100-foot

(30-meter) forward mast has collapsed. The crow's nest from which a lookout shouted, "Iceberg, right ahead!" disappeared. And the poop deck, where passengers crowded as the ship sank, folded under itself.

The gymnasium near the grand staircase has fallen in. And a 2019 expedition discovered that the captain's haunting bathtub, which became visible after the outer wall of the captain's cabin fell away, is gone.

"At some point you would expect the railing on the bow, which is very iconic, to have collapsed," Rush said.

The company has outfitted its carbon fiber-and-titanium submersible with high-definition cameras and multi-beam sonar equipment, Rush said. Charting the decomposition can help scientists predict the fate of other deep-sea wrecks, including those that sank during the world wars.

OceanGate also plans to document the site's sea life, such as crabs and corals. Hundreds of species have only been seen at the wreck, Rush said.

Another focus will be the debris field and its artifacts. David Concannon, an OceanGate adviser who's been involved in various

Titanic expeditions, said he once followed a trail "of light debris and small personal effects like shoes and luggage" for 2 kilometers (1.2 miles).

The expedition includes archaeologists and marine biologists. But OceanGate is also bringing roughly 40 people who paid to come along. They'll take turns operating sonar equipment and performing other tasks in the five-person submersible. They're funding the expedition by spending anywhere from \$100,000 to \$150,000 apiece.

"Somebody paid \$28 million to go with Blue Origin to space, not even the moon," said Renata Rojas, 53, of Hoboken, New Jersey. "This is cheap in comparison."

Obsessed with the Titanic since she was a kid, Rojas said she started studying oceanography in hopes of one day discovering the wreck. But it was found the same year, prompting her to pursue a career in banking instead.

"I kind of need to see it with my own eyes to know that it's really real," she said.

Bill Sauder, a Titanic historian who previously managed research for the company that owns the ship's salvage rights, said he doubts the expedition will discover "anything that's front-page news." □

Arctic's 'Last Ice Area' shows earlier-than-expected melt



In this March 2016 photo provided by Kristin Laidre, a polar bear is perched on a thick chunk of sea ice north of Greenland.

Associated Press

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
AP Science Writer

Part of the Arctic is nicknamed the "Last Ice Area," because floating sea ice there is usually so thick that it's likely to withstand global warming for decades. So, scientists were shocked last summer when there was suddenly enough open water for a ship to pass through.

The opening, documented by scientists aboard a German icebreaker, popped up in late July and August in the Wandel Sea north of Greenland. Mostly it was due to a freak weather event, but thinning sea ice from decades of climate change was a significant factor, according to a study Thursday in the journal Communications Earth and Environment.

While scientists have said most of the Arctic could be free of summer sea ice by mid-century, the Last Ice Area was not part of that equation. They figure the 380,000-square-mile (1-million-square-kilometer) area won't be ice-free in the summer until around 2100, said study co-author Kent Moore, a University of Toronto atmospheric physicist.

"It's called the Last Ice Area for a reason. We thought it was kind of stable," said co-author Mike Steele, a University of Washington

oceanographer. "It's just pretty shocking. ... In 2020, this area melted out like crazy."

Scientists believe the area north of Greenland and Canada could become the last refuge for animals like polar bears that depend on ice, said Kristin Laidre, a co-author and biologist at the University of Washington.

The main cause for the sudden ice loss was extraordinary strong winds that pushed the ice out the region and down the coast of Greenland, Moore said. That had happened in smaller, infrequent episodes, but this time was different, Moore said. The re-

searchers used computer simulations and 40 years of Arctic sea data to calculate that "there was a significant climate change signal" about 20%, they estimate in the event, Moore said.

In the past, thicker Wandel Sea ice would have resisted the strong winds, but in 2020 it was thinner and "more easily broken up and pushed out," said National Snow and Ice Data Center scientist Walt Meier, who wasn't part of the study.

Another part of the Last Ice Area, off Canada's Ellesmere Island, had open waters after the July 2020 collapse of part of the Milne

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ice shelf, but scientists are still studying it to determine if there is a climate change connection, Moore said. □



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'Forever Purge' gets political on southern border

AP Entertainment Writer

The dystopian action-horror "Purge" franchise has previously made stops in New York City, Los Angeles and Washington, DC. Now it's time to pull on cowboy boots and get ready for a little twangy Purge.

"The Forever Purge" is set along the U.S.-Mexican border and it's perhaps the most overtly political of the series, portraying a ragtag group of Americans trying to flee the anarchy and white supremacy of Texas for the safety of Mexico as the annual U.S. bloodlust event turns into an everyday abomination.

The film jettisons its horror roots for an aggressive — some may call it ham-fisted — social critique of modern America. But watching video of real insurrectionists on Jan. 6 try to violently take over the U.S. Capitol makes portions of "The Forever Purge" seem like a documentary.

"We are the real patriots of America," announce a group of the mask-wearing white supremacists during the latest fictional bloodletting, hoping to exterminate anyone Black or brown. "America will be America once again." There's no escaping the feeling that "The Forever Purge" is a poison pen letter to Trumpism. For those just joining creator James DeMonaco's "Purge" series, here's how it works: In a near-future,



This image released by Universal Pictures shows a scene from "The Forever Purge," directed by Everardo Valerio Gout.

Associated Press

the government, led by a nefarious party called the New Founding Fathers of America, allows an annual 12-hour period of lawlessness without recriminations. Over the course of a single night, rape, murder, robbery and everything else is permitted across the nation as a way to release anger but also a way to cull from an overpopulated nation and lower crime.

The last chronological film in the series — 2016's "The Purge: Election Year" — seemed to end with an outlawing of the purge, but that clearly didn't last. The New Founding Fathers are

back in charge as "The Forever Purge" opens and their annual horror shows have been reinstalled. There's also a wall established along the southern border. "It's starting, y'all," one main character in a Texas town announces as the purge countdown begins. She is protected by wealth in her ranching compound but her immigrant employees must huddle for safety in a makeshift shelter.

This time, the annual purge time passes without anyone we care about ending up dead, but then the event doesn't end. The film cracks open at this point,

adding class resentment to the mix. Groups of poor disenfranchised whites across the country begin targeting their white bosses and vowing that the purge won't stop. "Ever After!" is their war cry.

That makes strange allies of the Tucker ranching family and a pair of newly arrived immigrants from Mexico: Adela (Ana de la Reguera) and her husband Juan (Tenoch Huerta).

Up until then, the Tucker's son, Dylan, (Josh Lucas) was flirting with outright white supremacy, not wanting Spanish to be heard in his house and not believing

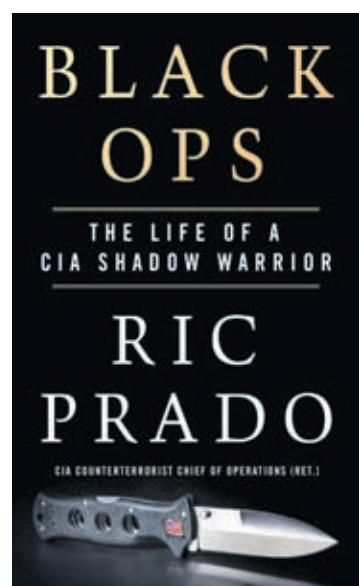
that cowboys could be anything but white Americans. Now, he and his family are being kept alive by the very people he disdained.

Martial law is declared but the Army can't stop the lawlessness. A potential escape may come from America's neighbors: Canada and Mexico, who have opened their borders for six hours to any refugees from the madness.

The film under Everardo Gout's direction then becomes a quest as the Tuckers — including Dylan Tucker's pregnant wife — together with Adela and Juan fight their way to El Paso, hunted by masked men demanding purification of the white race.

DeMonaco is not at all subtle with his script and maybe that's for the best. In one scene, a crazed white supremacist with a swastika face tattoo listens to various gunfire cracking outside, identifying each weapon by its blast — AK-47, Glock, AR-15. He calls it a very American sound: "Homegrown music from the American heartland."

Over the past films, DeMonaco has explored all kinds of different facets to this rich and complex purge notion, from gun control to the behavior of predatory corporations, to government brutality against people of color and class wars. □



This cover image released by St. Martin's Press shows "Black Ops: The Life of a CIA Shadow Warrior" by Ric Prado.

Associated Press

Former CIA operative Enrique 'Ric' Prado writing memoir

NEW YORK (AP) — A former CIA operative known for his exploits everywhere from Miami to Nicaragua to Afghanistan has a book deal. Enrique "Ric" Prado's "Black Ops: The Life of a CIA Shadow Warrior" will come out next March. "A lot has been said about the CIA over the years," Prado said in a statement Wednesday. "And a lot of it has been (expletive). I wrote 'Black Ops' to clear the name of my agency. I know the untold sacrifices that have been

made for this country by devoted men and women who have served anonymously, as quiet heroes. I'm eager to share those stories now." His book, subject to government review, was announced by St. Martin's Press, a division of Macmillan. Prado spent 24 years in the CIA before retiring in 2004. His assignments ranged from fighting with the Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s — even after Congress had cut off U.S. support for the Contras —

as they tried to overthrow the Sandinista government, to helping lead the hunt for Osama bin Laden, to overseeing SEAL Team Six missions into Afghanistan.

Investigative reports in The Nation and a book by reporter Evan Wright have alleged that Prado has ties to organized crime and drug traffickers in Miami and to shell companies for the private contractor Blackwater. According to St. Martin's, he is writing the book "to set the record straight

about himself, his career and the men and women of his agency."

"In 'Black Ops,' Prado shares a harrowing true story of life in the deadly world of assassins, terrorists, spies and revolutionaries and reveals how he and his fellow CIA officers devoted their lives to operating in the shadows to fight a little-seen and virtually unknown war to keep the United States safe from those who would do it harm," the publisher announced. □

U.S. women's hoops looks for seventh consecutive gold medal

By DOUG FEINBERG

Diana Taurasi and Sue Bird will try and become the first players ever to win five Olympic gold medals in basketball when the United States women's team begins play at the Tokyo Games.

The pair has been an integral part of the U.S. run of six consecutive golds at the Olympics.

"As far as being named to a fifth Olympics, especially with Sue, you know, it's just a great honor. It just makes you really appreciate all the people that have helped you," Taurasi said. "You know, everyone, USA Basketball, that, you know, after being around for 20 years now, you know, it's like a big family."

Taurasi and Bird both played with Dawn Staley on the 2004 Olympic team. Staley helped start this unprecedented run with the 1996 squad and now is the first Black head coach of the women's national team after being an assistant for the last two Olympics.



United States' Sue Bird, right, is defended during the first half of a women's exhibition basketball game against Canada in Bridgeport, Conn., in this Friday, July 29, 2016, file photo.

Associated Press

"Any time that you represent USA Basketball, you've got the biggest target on your back, on your chest," Staley said. "And everybody seems to play their best basketball."

It's been 25 years of domi-

nance for the Americans in the Olympics. They've won 49 consecutive games on the biggest international stage. No team has come within single digits of the U.S. since Russia lost in the semifinals of the 2004

Athens Games — the first Olympics that Taurasi and Bird played in — 66-62.

The Americans haven't dropped an Olympic contest since 1992 when they were beaten in the semis by the Unified Team. Only

host Japan has beaten the U.S. in an Olympics, topping the Americans in 1976, the inaugural appearance of women's basketball.

If the women can capture another gold medal in Tokyo, they would match the U.S. men's team that won seven consecutive golds from 1936-68.

While there are no guarantees, it would take a monumental upset for the team not to come home with gold.

The competition for the other two medals is wide open with Australia, Belgium, France, Canada, Serbia and Spain all having a shot at reaching the podium. Serbia just beat France to win the Eurobasket championship.

The Olympics switched to three pools of four teams for the Tokyo Games. South Korea, Serbia, Canada and Spain are in Group A. Joining the U.S. in Group B are France, Nigeria and Japan. Australia, Puerto Rico, China and Belgium are in Group C. □

Cavendish does it again, posts 32nd Tour stage win

CHATEAUROUX, France (AP) — Mark Cavendish is rolling back the years at the Tour de France.

Back in the race for the first time since 2018, the British sprinter has regained some of the luster of his youth to dominate the field again.

Cavendish claimed the short and flat sixth stage on Thursday in a mass sprint — in the very same city where he posted the first of his impressive 32 stage wins 13 years ago.

"It seems like every time we came here it was different," said Cavendish, who had already won twice in the town of Chateauroux. "Ten years since I last won here. Pretty special. And in pretty similar fashion."

After winning Stage 4 on Tuesday to start his unexpected comeback to the top, the best sprinter in the history of the race took a step closer to Belgian great Eddy Merckx's record of 34 stage wins.

Cavendish, after a bout

of depression and several seasons of struggles on and off the bike, secured a new contract with his former Deceuninck-Quick Step team for the 2021 season. The 36-year-old veteran convinced manager Patrick Lefevere he could perform at the top level again, but he was not expected to ride at the Tour and did not train specifically for the three-week race.

"I knew he could come back, but I did not know what level he could reach," Lefevere said.

Cavendish received a late call-up last month as a replacement for Sam Bennett, the best sprinter of last year's Tour.

In addition to Merckx's record, Cavendish's next goal will be to win the best sprinter's green jersey in Paris. Lefevere said he does not want to set targets for Cavendish's aging legs since reaching the French capital after crossing the Alps and the Pyrenees is al-

ready a big challenge for his protégé.

In Chateauroux, Cavendish was led out in the final stretch by his teammates as Alpecin-Fenix riders lined the other side of the large road. Cavendish then made his move to the right of his rivals in the last 100 meters and comfortably edged Jasper Philipsen and Nacer Bouhanni with his burst of speed.

Mathieu van der Poel kept the race leader's yellow jersey at the end of the 160.6-kilometer (100-mile) transition stage in central France with an eight-second lead over defending champion Tadej Pogacar. The main contenders enjoyed a quiet day in the peloton, conserving energy for the Alpine stages this weekend. There were no significant changes in the overall standings.

The stage got off a frenetic start as eight riders immediately jumped out of the pack.



Britain's Mark Cavendish, wearing the best sprinter's green, sprints to win the sixth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 160.6 kilometers (99.8 miles) with start in Tours and finish in Chateauroux, France, Thursday, July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

With several one-day classic specialists among them capable of riding at full-speed for hours — Olympic champion Greg Van Avermaet, Kasper Asgreen, Nils Politt, and Soren Kragh Andersen — the peloton could not give them too much leeway.

Groupama-FDJ and Arkea-Samsic, the teams of French sprinters Arnaud Demare and Bouhanni, respective-

ly, organized the chase until the breakaway split and Van Avermaet tried a solo effort at the front.

The pack finally slowed down as the Belgian rider was joined by Roger Kluge but kept them on a leash of under two minutes. The pair went all out on the long stretches of flat roads leading to the finale but were caught in the closing stages. □

Back at Centre Court, Coco Gauff impresses Dad with poise

WIMBLEDON, England (AP)

— Do not get the wrong idea about Coco Gauff and assume that, just because she's already displayed so much talent and promise by age 17, occasions such as Thursday's, when she played a woman twice her age at Centre Court, are in any way glossed over as "Been there, done that."

This is, after all, the most famous arena in tennis. This is, after all, Wimbledon. And Gauff is, after all, still relatively new to a lot of this: She began the week having played a total of two grass-court events and seven Grand Slam tournaments, one of which, of course, was her captivating run to the fourth round at the All England Club as a 15-year-old qualifier two years ago.

So, yes, there was some shakiness early against Elena Vesnina, a 34-year-old Russian who said afterward, "I saw that she was nervous." Gauff acknowledged so afterward. So maybe that's why she was the first to face break points. Or managed merely one groundstroke winner in the opening set. Still, the newcomer did what veterans do — find a way — and emerged with a 6-4, 6-3 victory to return to Wimble-



Coco Gauff of the US serves to Russia's Elena Vesnina during the women's singles second round match on day four of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Thursday July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

don's third round.

"With a little bit of adversity for the first time, she went for her shots and she stayed committed to the serve," said Gauff's father, Corey. "So I was impressed with that — her poise."

That matters at this level and on these stages, where one bad afternoon can send someone home.

While many familiar faces still are chasing the men's title this fortnight — eight-

time champion Roger Federer and No. 2 seed Daniil Medvedev, No. 4 Alexander Zverev and No. 7 Matteo Berrettini all won; No. 1 Novak Djokovic's bid for a sixth title resumes Friday — Elina Svitolina's loss Thursday means eight of the top 11 women in the WTA rankings are missing from the bracket due to defeat, withdrawal or injury.

"Mentally, for sure, I need to reset. I need to rest," No.

3 seed Svitolina said after producing 20 fewer winners than her foe in a 6-3, 6-4 loss to Magda Linette. "I need to feel, again, fresh to play the upcoming tournaments."

No. 1 Ash Barty, who retired mid-match against Linette at the French Open last month because of a hip injury, was not at her best but overcame nine double-faults to advance with a 6-4, 6-3 win on a day

with no rain, some slices of blue sky and even the sun sneaking through the clouds as the temperature finally topped 70 degrees Fahrenheit (20 Celsius).

"Not my best serving day," Barty said. "I was just out of rhythm a little bit. Some days you feel like you're 8 feet tall and you can't miss the box. Other days, like today, you feel like you're 3-foot-nothing."

Gauff's serve provided nine aces, including seven in the first set when a lot else wasn't really working.

A 118 mph delivery on match point was dumped in the net by Vesnina. Up in the player guest box, Gauff's parents rose. Dad clapped, then kissed Mom, who captured their daughter's moment with a cell-phone camera. It was a bit more subdued than the raucous celebrations two years ago, when Gauff was a revelation.

Ranked outside the Top 300 and the youngest player to make it through qualifying in tournament history, she went on to beat five-time champion Venus Williams in the first round and 2017 semifinalist Magdalena Rybarikova in the second, before saving two match points to get past Polona Hercog in the main stadium. □

NFL fines Washington \$10M after misconduct investigation



Washington Redskins owner Dan Snyder, left, and his wife Tanya Snyder, listen to head coach Ron Rivera during a news conference at the team's NFL football training facility in Ashburn, Va., in this Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

By STEPHEN WHYNO

The NFL has fined the Washington Football Team \$10

million and owner Dan Snyder is stepping away from day-to-day operations af-

ter an independent investigation into the organization's workplace misconduct.

The team was not stripped of any draft picks as part of the league's discipline that was announced Thursday stemming from lawyer Beth Wilkinson's investigation that began last summer.

The investigation found ownership and senior officials paid little attention to sexual harassment and other workplace issues that made the environment "highly unprofessional," particularly for women.

Snyder says his wife Tanya will be in charge for the next "several months." Tanya Snyder was named co-

CEO on Tuesday.

The league says Wilkinson interviewed more than 150 people, including current and former employees. NFL lawyer Lisa Friel said those interviews revealed a culture of fear.

"The culture at the club was very toxic and fell short of the NFL's values and we hold ownership to a higher standard," Friel said.

Wilkinson recommended establishing protocols for reporting harassment, a disciplinary action plan and regular training for employees. She also said the cheerleading team — which is now a co-ed dance team was part of several changes Washing-

ton has made over the past year.

"Over the past 18 months, Dan and Tanya have recognized the need for change and have undertaken important steps to make the workplace comfortable and dignified for all employees," Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. "Those changes, if sustained and built upon, should allow the club to achieve its goal of having a truly first-tier workplace."

Snyder said in a statement he agrees with the commissioner's decisions and is "committed to implementing his investigation's important recommendations." □